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some abatements (particularly for too much bad Spanish), is graceful, perspicuous, natural, and lively. Not a few parts of his book, which we have passed over in utter silence, will have a permanent value. The character and political condition of a large family of our sister republics receive important illustration from his comments. His sketches of the rich scenery which he visited are traced with a vigorous hand ; his remarks upon the scheme for crossing the isthmus by a ship-canal through the Lake Nicaragua, are full of useful information and judicious hints concerning that interesting enterprise ; and there is very spirited history and character-drawing in his account of the course of the Indian *Buonapartino*, Carrera. For the greater interest of this part of his work, as well as the rest, we may remark, by the way, that his publishers should by all means have afforded him a better map ; a thing which it is not even now too late to do, and which, from the great popularity of the work, they can now better than ever afford.

We take leave of him, for the present, with the most friendly wishes, in return for the gratification he has afforded us, and with the special wish for ourselves, —

“ When he next doth ride abroad,
May we be there to see ! ”

ART. VIII. — *Fables of LA FONTAINE. Illustrated by J. J. Grandville. Translated from the French, by ELIZUR WRIGHT, JR. In Two Vols. 8vo. Boston : Tappan & Dennett. 1841. pp. 245, 339.*

THE fable has, from the earliest times, been a favorite form of inculcating moral and philosophical truth. The curious analogies, between the varieties of the human character and the varieties in the animal world, noted by physiological observers, no doubt lie at the foundation of the pleasure, which all ages have taken, in attributing to beasts and birds the thoughts and actions of men. The science of heraldry, — of national, as well as individual escutcheons, — is but a perpetual commentary upon the same general fact. Names assigned to the distinguished heroes of savage tribes, or of nations in their early youth, Hawkeye, Snake, Panther,

and Richard Lion-heart, are standing collateral facts, illustrative of this singular tendency in the mind of man. Fables and apologues have always been the vehicle, through which the Oriental intellect, in particular, has conveyed its teachings to the world ; the genius of Greece early caught the strain, and the name of Æsop is consecrated as the symbol of wit and wisdom for all times. Modern writers, of every nation, have tried their hands at this. To say nothing of the fables and apologues of the Middle Ages, the Germans, French, and English of later times have had distinguished writers of this class. Lessing's fables are known to all students of German literature ; the easy, graceful style of Gay has made him a universal favorite ; but the palm must be yielded, undoubtedly, to the great French fabulist, La Fontaine. No one has seized, with such unerring, instinctive accuracy, the characteristics of the animal world, and turned them to such admirable account, in the illustration of the passions, hopes, fears, and weaknesses of man. This was a natural gift ; no education could have produced it. It was like the irresistible propensity of the landscape or cattle painter, which may be strengthened and improved by study and refined by practice, but can be created by no other power than the Creator of all. The consciousness of this inestimable gift came over La Fontaine, not until a comparatively late period, and then like a sudden inspiration ; and what French inspiration has ever left more genuine results, or made a deeper impression on contemporary and succeeding intellects ?

A great and peculiar genius, like La Fontaine, would have moulded any language to his purposes. Had he been of German birth, the language of Goethe and Schiller would have thrown aside its elephantine awkwardness half a century before it actually did. But still it must be regarded as one of the singular felicities of his position, that the polished language of France was his mother tongue. Step by step that admirable language had grown to be the most refined in Europe, the language of polite society, of letters, and diplomacy, all over Christendom ; the conversation and writings of the best wits of the modern world had enriched it with the most expressive idioms and the most inimitable graces. The genius of wit and repartee had selected it for his own. An almost Athenian fastidiousness of taste had removed every trace of rusticity and barbarism, and that unequalled clearness of per-

ception and vivacity of intellectual sensation, for which Frenchmen have always been distinguished, stamped upon it a crystalline transparency, which the mystifications of Madame de Staël, and the dark abominations of her successors of the Romantic, Satanic, Victor Hugo, and George Sand schools, have not been able materially to lessen or dim. Even German metaphysics has tried its power upon the French language in vain. We can never misunderstand the French writers, even of the new philosophical schools ; we always see through them, and understand perfectly their meaning, when they have any, and their no-meaning, when they have none. It is a desperate undertaking for a Frenchman to set up for obscure, mysterious, and transcendental ; the words of his language will not lend their aid, and, like a flock of turkeys, refuse to travel after dark. The best qualities of this language were fully brought out in the brilliant age of Louis the Fourteenth, who had drawn around his court an assemblage of men, the like of whom France has never seen since. We may complain, that the French literature of that time is inferior in passionate earnestness to the productions thrown upon the world in the present revolutionary age. But what French tragedian can the romantic school set up against Racine, in whose works all the charms of the most polished style are found in their highest perfection ? What comedian, — we do not say of the present age, but of all modern times, — in wit, and the most felicitous drawing of human character, and the most pungent satire of the follies and vices of his times, approaches Molière ? It may well be doubted, whether the late French literature, in prose or in poetry, can compare, in any of the highest excellences of thought and style, with the literature of the Augustan Age of Louis the Fourteenth ; and then, as to decency and decorum and grace, the writers of that time were angels of light compared to the Paul de Kocks and the George Sands of the present.

In the midst of that extraordinary age flourished the fabulist, La Fontaine. As a man of genius, he was one of its brightest ornaments ; in originality, we think he stood at the head of his great contemporaries. As a master of all the delicacies of the French language, he was at least equal to any writer of his day. His fables are more read probably than any other work, excepting the comedies of Molière ; more read by English readers than any similar works of English writers. They possess an indescribable fascination, not only

for children, but for men, the "children of a larger growth." His thoughts are always fresh and natural ; his little pictures of human life are perfectly drawn ; the short stories in which human actors are introduced, are conceived in the same spirit as the fables of animals, and the moral is worked out with a clearness, distinctness, and force, that make an indelible impression on the mind. His style is marked by the best qualities of the best writers of his age. It is familiar yet elegant ; idiomatic but classic ; pithy and pointed, without any apparently studied attempts at conciseness ; and the versification is happily varied, and adapted to the various characters and trains of thought which it is the poet's object to set forth. The exquisite turns of expression, which so frequently occur in the Fables of La Fontaine, mark the peculiar character of the French language, and give a better idea of its idiomatic richness than the writings of any other author, always excepting the immortal comedies of Molière. His humor is abundant, without degenerating into coarseness ; his satire is keen, but never cynical. The faults, errors, and weaknesses of men are open to his searching gaze, but he is never misanthropical, never out of humor with his fellow-beings. That such a writer should be universally popular, is not at all surprising ; his works have gone through more editions than we shall undertake to count. Not long since a new illustrated edition was published, in the most magnificent style of Parisian typography, the illustrations by J. J. Grandville. The reader of this edition will be at a loss which most to admire, the exuberant wit of the poet, or the extraordinary felicity with which the artist has told the poet's story in his illustrations. Taken as a whole, the book is one of the most tasteful specimens of the union of typographic and artistic skill and genius, that have been produced for the delight of the present age.

It must be obvious, if the preceding remarks are correct, that the translation of La Fontaine's Fables is a work of peculiar difficulty and delicacy. Whoever undertakes the task must have something of the author's peculiar genius ; — something of his happy talent for observing the ways of animals, and their strong resemblances to the ways of man, and not a little power over the resources of the English language in humorous and idiomatic expression. We are not among those, who think a paraphrase is a translation. We do not think it the translator's duty to give us what he supposes his author would have written, had he written in English, for this

is precisely what the translator can never know. It is his plain duty, as we conceive, to let us know what his author *has actually* written, as a German, or a Frenchman, or whatever the case may be ; not violating, of course, the genius of the language into which he translates, while doing so. We do not admit, that the English language is incompetent to this task. It is rich enough to cope with the difficulties of any foreign author, who has a fund of solid thought sufficient to sustain a faithful translation. Taking the whole range of the English language and literature, from the racy primeval expressions of Chaucer to the affluent harmonies of Spenser, — the all-embracing, all-describing, all-expressive forms of Shakspeare, — the majestic music of Milton, which made his mother tongue search her coffers round and round, — to say nothing of the thousand-fold varieties of later prose-writers and poets, we have no doubt that all the phases of human thought, from the broadest farce up to the sublimest conceptions of genius, may be furnished with suitable expression from the store-houses of our mother-English speech.

The German has commonly been supposed to be the best language for translation ; and so, in some respects, it undoubtedly is. Its astonishing rhythmical flexibility enables it to imitate ancient as well as modern measures ; and the facility of forming new and expressive compounds supplies it often with exact equivalents for the compounds of other languages, which in English would have to be weakened by periphrasis. But the greatest advantage, after all, lies in the conscientious care and fidelity of the German translators themselves ; first, in mastering the meaning of the author to be translated, with all the collateral and subsidiary learning ; and, secondly, in presenting an exact representation of him, — not a mere outline resemblance, but a likeness carried through all the traits of his literary character, small as well as great. German literature by this means has gradually accumulated in its own treasure-house the literary wealth of all ages and nations ; so that the literary man would be justified in expending the time necessary to learn the German language, for its translations alone. But when we turn to the English, the picture is sadly changed. Pope's Homer, the most popular translation in the English language, has scarcely a single point of resemblance, except in the outlines of the story, to the original. Cowper's is better, but bears no comparison with Voss's German version. Sotheby is stiff

and grotesque ; an ancient statue in bag-wig, breeches, and knee-buckles. And so of the great mass of English translations, whether of ancient or modern literature ; because the men who have executed them have failed to perceive the true aim of translation, and of course have not translated, but only *done into English*.

Now, as we have intimated above, we hold that all this is unnecessary. We believe the English language fully capable of giving a faithful representation of any foreign author who is worth representing at all ; not only of what that author would have said, had he been an Englishman, but of what he did say, being what he was. We should not have to go far to prove the truth of this assertion. The numerous translations, by Longfellow, from German, Danish, and Swedish ; as well as from most of the modern languages derived from the Latin, prove that only three requisites are wanting to make a perfect translator, — requisites, which we hope we shall not be thought unreasonable for insisting upon, — namely, genius, learning, and industry. Where these are found, be sure the English language will do its part towards making your translation a good one.

We have, in a former Number, given a brief opinion of Mr. Wright's merits as a translator, judging from a small specimen which we then had the pleasure of examining. We have now read the entire work, and are prepared to award it high praise. The translator has evidently a touch of the same spirit with his author. He is kith and kin with La Fontaine. He has the same good-humored way of looking upon the world and the doings of man, and something of the same humorous turn of expression. He has entered very fully into the genius of the French author, and reproduced, in most respects, a spirited and faithful likeness. The general character of his English style is pure, racy, and lively. His expressions are often exceedingly happy, considered by themselves, or viewed as equivalents for the French. His versification is generally a good representation of the original, and skilfully diversified to suit the exigencies of the subject ; and the book, taken as a whole, we cannot doubt will prove a most acceptable addition to the amusing and instructive reading, to which our young people have access.

But, as impartial critics, we are bound to state the objec-

tions we have to make to some of the minor details of its execution. We cannot say, that it comes up to the standard of translation which we would establish. Spirited as it is, on the whole, it does not preserve the perfect elegance of the original. La Fontaine never forgets the most delicate and fastidious proprieties of speech for an instant ; but his translator sometimes allows a coarse or slang expression to mar the beauty of his page. The flow of the Frenchman's verse is always easy as the flow of polished conversation ; and his rhymes are so perfect, that we feel as if he could have used no other word, had he been writing in prose ; but his American representative sometimes misrepresents him by putting his felicitous verse into lame, harshly-inverted, hobbling lines, which neither gods nor men, nor columns, can permit ; and not unfrequently, we are sorry to say it, the rhymes are very unaccommodating neighbours, being forced into a proximity for which they were never intended by nature. Sometimes, too, he fails to apprehend precisely the force of an idiom, and sometimes misapprehends it altogether. These are serious blemishes, and as such to be regretted in a book likely to have an extended circulation, and fairly entitled by its numerous merits to very great success ; and we have felt it our duty to indicate their character in general terms, hoping that they may be removed in some future edition.

We take a few, without searching far, or looking out the most marked, merely to show what we mean. In Fable VII. he translates the lines, —

“ Êtes-vous satisfait ? Moi, dit-il ; pourquoi non ?
N'ai-je pas quatre pieds aussi bien que les autres ? ”
“ Are you well satisfied ? And wherefore not ?
Said Jock. Haven't I four *trotters* with the rest ? ”

Now we submit, that, in the presence of Jupiter, even Jock would not have ventured upon such a piece of levity, as to call his feet *trotters*. It should have been literal,

Are you contented ? Me ! says he, why not ?
Have I not four feet, just like all the rest ?

As a specimen of bad rhyming take from the same fable :

“ The elephant, though famed as beast *judicious*,
While on his own account he had no *wishes*,
Pronounced dame whale too big to suit his taste,
Of flesh and fat she was a perfect waste.”

It should be,

The elephant, on being heard,
Wise as he was, said pretty much the same ;
Dame whale was much too huge, averred, &c.

And in Fable III.,

“ The world is full of folks,
Of just such *wisdom* ;
The lordly dame provokes
The cit to build *his dome*,” &c.

Which is bad rhyme, and bad reason too. Translate,

The world is full of people, who are just such sages.
Each citizen, like mighty lord, a palace rears.
Each petty prince has his ambassadors ;
Each marquis keeps his pages.

The original is,

“ Le monde est plein de gens qui ne sont pas plus sages :
Tout bourgeois veut bâtir comme les grands seigneurs,
Tout petit prince a des ambassadeurs ;
Tout marquis veut avoir des pages.”

For a mistranslation, take the lines from Fable IX.,

“ No, said the rustic rat ;
To-morrow dine with me.
I'm not offended at
Your feast so great and free.”

It should be,

It is enough, the rustic cried,
To-morrow you will visit me ;
It is not that myself I pride
On all your regal jollity.

The next stanza we must add, as being too paraphrastic, and because it contains the odious word *swap*.

“ For I've no fare resembling ;
But then I eat at leisure ;
And would not *swap* for pleasure,
So mixed with fear and trembling.”

Translate,

But nothing comes to dash my joy,
I eat quite at leisure.
Good-by, then. Fie on the pleasure
That a fright can destroy.

The original of these two stanzas is,

“ C'est assez, dit le rustique ;
 Demain vous viendrez chez moi.
 Ce n'est pas que je me pique
 De tous vos festins de roi :
 Mais rien ne vient m'interrompre ;
 Je mange tout à loisir.
 Adieu donc. Fi du plaisir,
 Que la crainte peut corrompre.”

But a truce to fault-finding, which is so much easier than doing better one's self, or even as well. We have already said enough, to show the high estimate we put upon the author and his work. It only remains to say, that the volumes are published in a style befitting their literary merits, and are adorned with engravings from the plates of the splendid French edition, which we mentioned at the beginning of this notice. We close this brief review by giving a specimen or two of the manner in which the translator has executed his task ; and we will take them quite at random, as we did the passages for censure. Take, for the first example, the twelfth Fable of Vol. I. ; and for the second, the eighth Fable of Vol. II.

“ An envoy of the Porte Sublime,
 As history says, once on a time,
 Before the imperial German court
 Did rather boastfully report
 The troops commanded by his master's firman,
 As being a stronger army than the German ;
 To which a Dutch attendant,
 Our prince has more than one dependant
 Who keeps an army at his own expense.
 The Turk, a man of sense,
 Rejoined, I am aware
 What power your emperor's servants share.
 It brings to mind a tale both strange and true,
 A thing which once, myself, I chanced to view.
 I saw come darting through a hedge
 Which fortified a rocky ledge,
 A hydra's hundred heads ; and in a trice
 My blood was turning into ice.
 But less the harm than terror, —
 The body came no nearer ;
 Nor could, unless it had been sundered
 To parts at least a hundred.

While deeply musing on this sight,
Another dragon came to light,
Whose single head avails
To lead a hundred tails ;
And seized with juster fright,
I saw him pass the hedge, —
Head, body, tails, — a wedge
Of living and resistless powers,—
The other was your emperor's force ; this ours."

THE VULTURES AND THE PIGEONS.

" Mars once made havoc in the air :
Some cause aroused a quarrel there
Among the birds ; — not those that sing,
The courtiers of the merry Spring,
And by their talk, in leafy bowers,
Of loves they feel, enkindle ours ;
Nor those which Cupid's mother yokes
To whirl on high her golden spokes ;
But naughty hawk and vulture folks,
Of hooked beak and talons keen.
The carcase of a dog, 't is said,
Had to this civil carnage led.
Blood rained upon the swarded green,
And valiant deeds were done, I ween.
But time and breath would surely fail
To give the fight in full detail ;
Suffice to say that chiefs were slain,
And heroes strowed the sanguine plain,
Till old Prometheus, in his chains,
Began to hope an end of pains.
'T was sport to see the battle rage,
And valiant hawk with hawk engage ;
'T was pitiful to see them fall, —
Torn, bleeding, weltering, gasping, all.
Force, courage, cunning, all were plied ;
Intrepid troops on either side
No efforts spared to populate
The dusky realms of hungry Fate.
This woful strife awoke compassion
Within another feathered nation,
Of iris neck and tender heart.
They tried their hand at mediation, —
To reconcile the foes, or part.

The pigeon people duly chose
 Ambassadors, who worked so well
 As soon the murderous rage to quell,
 And staunch the source of countless woes.
 A truce took place, and peace ensued.
 Alas ! the people dearly paid
 Who such pacification made !
 Those cursed hawks at once pursued
 The harmless pigeons, slew and ate.
 Till towns and fields were desolate.
 Small prudence had the friends of peace
 To pacify such foes as these !

The safety of the rest requires
 The bad should flesh each other's spears :
 Whoever peace with them desires
 Had better set them by the ears."

ART. IX.—CRITICAL NOTICES.

1. — *Pantology ; or a Systematic Survey of Human Knowledge ; proposing a Classification of all its Branches, and illustrating their History, Uses, Relations, and Objects ; with a Synopsis of their leading Facts and Principles ; and a Select Catalogue of Books on all Subjects, suitable for a Cabinet Library.* By ROSWELL PARK, A. M., Professor of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry in the University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia : Hogan & Thompson. 1841. 8vo. pp. 587.

THE author of this work has endeavoured to furnish a general view of all departments of knowledge and all subjects of human inquiry, wherein they should be arranged into proper classes, and their mutual relations and dependencies be clearly perceived. It is the same scheme, which once tasked the intellect of Bacon, and which was taken up at the stage where he left it by D'Alembert, and so far modified and enlarged as to serve for an introduction to that vast repository of learning, wit, and infidelity, — the French *Encyclopédie*. But it is generally admitted, that the arrangement there given is quite unsatisfactory, and that we may expect every future attempt of the same kind to be open to serious objections.

There are inherent difficulties in the way of a proper execu-